

## The Power of the Ladies Auxiliary Club and Government Cheese.

In the tapestry of American history, few threads are as uniquely colorful as the saga of government cheese, a symbol of both aid and excess. It began in the aftermath of the Great Depression, with the Agricultural Act of 1949, which empowered the Commodity Credit Corporation to stabilize farm incomes by purchasing dairy products from farmers. This act set the stage for a peculiar chapter in the 1980s when the U.S. government found itself with an overabundance of cheese, a result of policies aimed at supporting dairy farmers during fluctuating milk production and economic downturns. The government's solution was to distribute this cheese to welfare beneficiaries, food stamp recipients, and the elderly through Social Security, as well as to food banks and churches.

This cheese, often described as a cross between Velveeta and American cheese, became a staple in military kitchens, schools, and on the dinner tables

of those in need. Its distinctive pale orange blocks were a sign of government assistance during tough economic times, and for many, it was received with a mix of gratitude and a sense of defeat. The cheese was a physical manifestation of the government's role in providing for its citizens, yet it also highlighted the complexities and challenges of such interventions.

The Lady Auxiliary Clubs, often pillars of community support, played a significant role in distributing this cheese. These clubs, composed of women dedicated to community service, became the unsung heroes of this narrative. They organized, stored, and handed out the cheese, ensuring it reached those who needed it most. Their efforts were a testament to the power of community action and the spirit of volunteerism that often rises in response to governmental programs.

The story of government cheese is not just about the food itself but about the people it touched and the communities it brought together. It's a reminder of the government's capacity to impact

lives directly and the enduring human spirit that can turn a simple block of cheese into a symbol of hope and resilience. As we reflect on this peculiar slice of history, we can appreciate the complex interplay between government policy and community action, and how, together, they can address the needs of a nation. The power of government cheese lies not just in its nutritional value, but in its ability to nourish a sense of community and shared responsibility in times of need.